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## Chiricahua National Park Designation Campaign

<b>Applying Organization</b>	Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)	<b>Application Date</b>	5/15/2026
<b>Applying Contact</b>	Maiji Castro	<b>Status</b>	Submitted
<b>Record Type</b>	Member Collective	<b>Created By</b>	Maiji Castro, 5/14/2026, 4:23 PM
		<b>Create Account</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Project Overview

<b>Project Name</b>	Chiricahua National Park Designation Campaign	<b>Requested Amount</b>	\$50,000.00
<b>Project/Campaign Name</b>	Chiricahua National Park Designation Campaign		
<b>Type of Project</b>	Designation	<b>Project Multiple Locations</b>	
<b>Project Location (State or Territory)</b>	AZ	<b>Longitude</b>	-109.342369.
<b>Latitude</b>	32.014088		

### Organization Details

<b>Organization Name</b>	Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors	<b>Primary address for organization</b>	11100 Wildlife Center Drive Reston, Virginia 20190 United States
<b>Contact Name</b>	Maiji Castro	<b>Contact Title</b>	Foundation Relations Officer
<b>Contact Email Address</b>	castrom@nwf.org		
<b>Annual Operating Budget</b>	\$1,201,635.00	<b>Tax Status/Organization Type</b>	Charitable Organizations
<b>Staff Size</b>	6	<b>Main Phone</b>	703-438-6411
<b>Total Membership</b>	78	<b>Organization Website/Social Media Feed</b>	https://www.hechoonline.org/
<b>BIPOC-led</b>	Yes	<b>C-Suite Staff</b>	NWF's status as not being BIPOC-led - HECHO does have BIPOC leadership, staff, and advisory board

### Grant Details

<b>Awarded Amount</b>		<b>Awarded Date</b>	
<b>Funding Program</b>			
<b>Primary Project Type</b>		<b>Secondary Project Type</b>	
<b>Term Start Date</b>		<b>Term End Date</b>	

### Proposal Questions

## Mission/History Of Organization

Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO) was founded in 2013 to conserve and protect public lands and natural resources by raising awareness of Southwestern Hispanic culture and land stewardship practices rooted in the concepts of *querencia*, a deep connection to the land, and *herencia*, the heritage and responsibility to pass it on. HECHO connects and convenes Southwestern Hispanic local elected officials, community leaders, and federal policymakers to shape pragmatic, bipartisan solutions for public lands and water. Through its Hispanic Conservation Leadership Council (HCLC), HECHO elevates local expertise, cultural knowledge, and on-the-ground perspectives to help advance durable conservation outcomes. Since becoming part of the National Wildlife Federation in 2017, HECHO has maintained a distinct voice, brand, and leadership role while benefiting from the reach and infrastructure of a national conservation organization.

## Location Details

Located in southeastern Arizona, Chiricahua National Monument sits within the broader Madrean Sky Islands region, one of the most biologically diverse landscapes in North America. Known for its rhyolite rock pinnacles, grasslands, canyons and forested mountain ranges, the monument protects 12,025 acres of important wildlife habitat while supporting more than 1,200 plant species, migratory bird populations, black bears, mountain lions, *coati mundis* and other wildlife species. The Madrean Sky Islands landscape spans southern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and northern Mexico and contains approximately 55 isolated mountain ranges connected by desert valleys, grasslands and oak woodlands. More than 7,000 species of plants and animals, including over half of North America's bird species, are found throughout the region. The Sky Islands also serve as an important wildlife corridor connecting the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Madre Occidental, supporting watershed health, biodiversity and ecological connectivity across the Southwest.

Chiricahua National Monument's local communities have deep cultural, historical, and recreational connections to the landscape. The area reflects Indigenous stewardship, Hispanic heritage, military history and early conservation efforts tied to the monument's establishment in 1924. Now, Chiricahua's visitors come from across the country and support an important outdoor recreation industry for communities in Arizona. HECHO supports the designation of Chiricahua from a national monument to a national park as a practical, bipartisan conservation opportunity that can not only strengthen long-term protection but also increase visibility for recreation, investment and conservation throughout the Madrean Sky Island region. The effort has generated support from local leaders, conservation partners and gateway communities because of Chiricahua's ecological value, recreation opportunities and growing importance to the regional economy. This campaign is part of a broader reinforcement of America's conservation vision— one that affirms the importance and relevance of national parks even in the face of increasing challenges. By elevating the national significance of the Chiricahua, we will leverage a strategic opportunity to advance deeper conversations with decision-makers about what national parks and public lands need to succeed, including adequate staffing, maintenance, infrastructure, gateway community coordination and sustained federal investment.

<b>Final Success</b>	Final success will be the designation of Chiricahua National Monument as Arizona's fourth national park, elevating national recognition of 12,025 acres of ecologically significant Sky Island habitat, cultural resources, and outdoor recreation opportunities while strengthening nature-based tourism and local economic opportunity in southeastern Arizona.	<b>Impact on Climate and Bioiversity</b>	If successful, this project will strengthen climate resiliency and biodiversity by elevating Chiricahua National Monument as a nationally recognized conservation anchor within the Madrean Sky Islands, one of the most biologically significant landscapes in the Southwest. Chiricahua's conservation significance is rooted in its dramatic elevation gradients, intact habitat, and location at the convergence of the Rocky Mountains, Sierra Madre, Sonoran Desert, and Chihuahuan Desert. These conditions create a rare mosaic of desert, grassland, chaparral, deciduous forest, and coniferous forest habitats that support exceptional plant and wildlife diversity, including habitat for threatened, endangered, and endemic species. As climate change increases pressure from extreme heat, drought, wildfire, and shifting species ranges, protected Sky Island landscapes like Chiricahua National Monument become increasingly important as climate refugia. The monument's elevation changes, canyons, riparian areas, forests, grasslands, and relatively intact habitat give plants and wildlife room to move and adapt as conditions change. National park designation would not only recognize these values but also strengthen public support, policymaker attention, and long-term stewardship resources for a landscape that plays an important role in regional resilience. The effort also supports landscape connectivity by reinforcing Chiricahua National Monument's role within a broader network of protected public lands in southeastern Arizona. The 12,025-acre monument sits within the larger Chiricahua Mountains and is closely connected to the surrounding Coronado National Forest and the 87,700-acre Chiricahua Wilderness, which protects much of the mountain range's upper slopes and inner canyons. By elevating Chiricahua National Monument to national park status, this effort will help secure stronger recognition of a key protected core within the Sky Islands and build public and bipartisan support for connected conservation across adjacent public lands, wildlife habitat, and recreation landscapes.
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<b>Expected Economic &amp; Recreational Impact</b>	National park designation is expected to strengthen the long-term economic and recreational value of Chiricahua National Monument and the surrounding communities by increasing national visibility, tourism interest and investment. Increased visitation would increase demand for lodging, restaurants, fuel, retail, guiding and other visitor services. As a result, all of this would strengthen the case for long-term investment in resource stewardship, especially from a
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<b>Strategy &amp; Timeline For Final Success</b>	HECHO's strategy uplifts Chiricahua as both a place-based conservation campaign and a relationship-building opportunity: a way to secure national park designation for a highly biodiverse landscape while deepening bipartisan support for parks, protected public lands, gateway communities and long-term stewardship across the Southwest. Chiricahua is a strong fit for this strategy because it is both a highly biodiverse landscape and a politically viable
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rural constituency that sees conservation tourism, and public lands as connected to long-term community prosperity.

In 2024, approximately 71,400 visitors spent an estimated \$5.1 million in gateway communities surrounding Chiricahua National Monument, supporting 50 jobs, \$1.7 million in labor income, \$3.2 million in value added and \$5.7 million in total economic output. Since 2017, labor income tied to visitation has increased by 42%, value added by 60%, and total economic output by 50%. Willcox, Arizona has also experienced a 67% increase in bed tax revenue over the past five years, reflecting tourism's growing role in supporting local businesses and community infrastructure. Local leaders, chambers of commerce and regional governments have formally supported national park designation efforts, and we expect that Willcox and the broader Cochise County region would see increased recreation-related spending.

Approximately 85% of the monument is federally designated Wilderness, underscoring its exceptional conservation and recreation value and showing why different designations matter. Wilderness protects Chiricahua's wild character and offers more primitive recreation experiences, while national park status would build on that protection by making Chiricahua a focal point for public understanding, responsible recreation, stewardship investment and broader landscape conservation. This visibility can encourage longer visits, strengthen the regional recreation economy, and support investment in larger landscapes and rural outdoor recreation infrastructure.

opportunity. It has strong local support, clear outdoor recreation and rural economic benefits, and demonstrated bipartisan traction in Congress.

During the 2026–2027 grant period, HECHO will focus on supporting Senate advancement and positioning the Chiricahua National Park Act for the most viable path to final passage, whether through committee action or inclusion in a broader public lands package. HECHO's particular role is to serve as a bridge-builder and amplifier. We will connect Hispanic and Southwestern leaders with congressional offices, reinforce local support, and help policymakers understand why Chiricahua national park designation matters for conservation, recreation, tourism, cultural heritage and long-term public lands stewardship.

A focus of this strategy is mobilizing HECHO's Hispanic Conservation Leadership Council (HCLC), our network of Hispanic elected officials and community leaders from across the Southwest who bring lived connections into public lands decision-making. Through HECHO's fall and spring Washington, D.C. fly-ins, in-district meetings, virtual engagement and strategic convenings, HCLC members and other trusted local voices will help bring community-grounded perspectives directly to congressional offices and federal decision-makers. These leaders can speak credibly about the importance of public lands to outdoor recreation, rural economies, watershed stewardship, cultural heritage and community well-being. HECHO will also maintain a clear and consistent case for designation by supporting sign-on efforts and developing leave-behind materials, targeted communications, and storytelling that elevates local leadership and reinforces the conservation and community case for Senate passage. HECHO will use the Chiricahua effort to demonstrate that conservation tied to place, local pride, rural economic benefit and practical stewardship can still earn bipartisan support.

In the first phase of the grant period, HECHO will refine its Senate strategy, identify priority congressional offices, update messaging and prepare HCLC members and local leaders for engagement. In the second phase, HECHO will use its fall D.C. fly-in, in-district meetings and follow-up communications to reinforce support for Senate movement and broaden bipartisan awareness of the effort. In the third phase, HECHO will elevate the campaign through additional congressional engagement, targeted

communications and local or regional convenings tied to Chiricahua and the broader Madrean Sky Islands. In the final phase of the grant period, HECHO will focus on the most viable legislative pathway available, including Senate committee movement, package negotiations, unanimous consent, voice vote or other final passage opportunities.

Potential challenges include limited Senate floor time, competing congressional priorities, political shifts around public lands policy, and broader debates tied to federal land management, national monuments and public lands selloff proposals. While HECHO cannot control the Senate agenda, we can help ensure that Chiricahua remains visible, locally grounded, bipartisan, and ready for action when a legislative opportunity emerges.

HECHO's strategy is to capitalize on the current momentum of the bill while grounding the campaign in practical, place-based outcomes that resonate across political perspectives: conservation, outdoor recreation, stewardship, tourism, cultural heritage and rural economic benefit. Final success will be congressional passage and enactment of the Chiricahua National Park Act, designating 12,025 acres of protected public land as Arizona's fourth national park. We are hopeful that the Senate bill will be put to a floor vote as early as this summer.

If the Act passes the Senate and is signed into law this summer, HECHO's strategy for the remaining grant period will focus on elevating the prestige, benefits and permanence of national park status to the American public through targeted communications and events. HECHO sees measurable opportunities beyond designation, including broader support for tools such as GAOA Legacy Restoration Fund reauthorization and annual appropriations and clearer opposition to broad public lands selloff proposals. The passage of the Chiricahua National Park Act will be a tremendous bipartisan accomplishment on which HECHO will continue to build momentum and support for additional permanent land protection campaigns.

HECHO would welcome deeper engagement from the business community to help expand awareness and strengthen support for the Chiricahua designation campaign. With support from outdoor industry partners and The Conservation Alliance member businesses, we could expand our outreach and increase awareness within

#### Key Decision Makers

HECHO is focused on influencing the congressional decision-makers needed to move the Chiricahua National Park Act to final passage. The House bill passed in early 2026 after HECHO built a strong working relationship with Rep. Juan Ciscomani and members of the Bipartisan Public Lands Caucus. HECHO supported Rep. Ciscomani's

#### Working With Business Community

leadership on the Chiricahua bill through multimedia communications, advocacy trips, and the development of advocacy materials such as fact sheets. This relationship has also helped open the door to continued collaboration with Rep. Ciscomani and other bipartisan offices through the Bipartisan Public Lands Caucus around other public lands priorities.

HECHO also helped secure the introduction of companion Senate legislation (S. 3715) through advocacy and relationship-building with the offices of Senators Kelly and Gallego. With the House bill already passed, HECHO's primary decision-maker focus is shifting to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Stewardship Caucus. Priority offices include Senators Risch, Padilla, Gallego Sheehy, Heinrich, Cortez Masto, Hickenlooper, and Daines. We believe support from these offices is achievable because the Chiricahua initiative offers a locally grounded, bipartisan conservation opportunity with clear ties to outdoor recreation, rural economic benefit, tourism, and long-term stewardship. HECHO will engage these decision-makers through in-person meetings, at our fly-ins, engage via HCLC member relationships, and with targeted digital communications that keep Chiricahua visible and ready for Senate action.

#### **Elevate Voices**

HECHO's work is rooted in the belief that public lands decisions are stronger when they include Hispanic leaders and communities whose culture, traditions, livelihoods and family experiences are deeply connected to land and water across the Southwest. For many Hispanic families, public lands are places where traditions are passed down through hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, ranching, farming, acequia stewardship, family gatherings and time outdoors across generations. For the Chiricahua effort, HECHO is mobilizing HCLC members and trusted Southwestern leaders who can speak credibly about why national park designation matters for conservation, outdoor recreation, cultural heritage, local economies and long-term stewardship. HCLC members engaged in support of Chiricahua include sustainability leader Orlando Casarez, Coconino County Supervisor Jeronimo Vasquez, and Arizona Representative Patty Contreras. HECHO creates opportunities for these leaders to engage directly with decision-makers through Washington, D.C. fly-ins, congressional meetings, in-district engagement, agency conversations, sign-on opportunities, storytelling and partner communications. These opportunities allow Hispanic leaders to bring community-rooted

communities directly impacted like Willcox, Arizona, as well as larger recreation and conservation groups, regarding the importance of designating Chiricahua National Monument through events with Rep. Ciscomani and other local leaders. HECHO would also partner with the business community to uplift messaging on the campaign for Arizona's new national park on various media platforms. Involving business partners will strengthen the case for protection by bringing in additional perspectives and networks.

#### **Measurable On-Ground Outcomes**

HECHO's campaign outcomes include:

1. Passage of the Chiricahua National Park Act or progress toward national park designation, including Senate advancement, committee engagement or bipartisan package consideration.
2. Broader bipartisan support for the Act, reflected in increased engagement from Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee offices, Senate Stewardship Caucus members and other bipartisan public lands champions.
3. Stronger decision-maker understanding of long-term public lands stewardship needs, such as the connection between designation, rural tourism, visitor experience, deferred maintenance, and sustained investment in public lands such as through the continued investment in the National Park Service, and reauthorization of the GAOA's Legacy Restoration Fund.
4. Increased visibility and support from Hispanic and Southwestern leaders, measured by HCLC member engagement, sign-ons, public statements, policymaker meetings, or communications elevating Chiricahua's conservation, recreation, cultural and economic value.

perspectives to federal offices and connect Chiricahua to broader public lands values across the Southwest. This effort also benefits from support by local governments, gateway communities, conservation partners, outdoor recreation advocates and Tribal Nations, including the San Carlos Apache Tribe and the Mescalero Apache Tribe. HECHO does not speak on behalf of Tribal Nations, but respects Tribal sovereignty and seeks to reinforce Indigenous, Hispanic, rural and gateway community perspectives. By elevating Hispanic leadership and outdoor traditions, HECHO helps broaden support for Chiricahua national park designation and demonstrates that durable public lands protections are stronger when grounded in culture, local experience, practical stewardship, and community benefit.

**TCA Funding Plan**

TCA's support will help HECHO move this project from bipartisan momentum to Senate passage by providing the capacity to sustain congressional engagement, activate Hispanic and Southwestern leaders, and keep the designation effort visible with key decision-makers. Funding will support HECHO's spring and fall Washington, D.C. fly-ins, advocacy materials, sign-on efforts, HCLC engagement, and strategic communications tied to passage of the Chiricahua National Park Act. TCA's support would also strengthen the campaign by connecting HECHO with outdoor industry and business voices that can reinforce the economic and recreation case for designation. These partnerships can help demonstrate that Chiricahua is not only a conservation priority, but also a rural economic asset and a model for bipartisan public lands stewardship across the Southwest.

**Confidential Items**

**Other Relevant Application Details**

HECHO is a fiscally sponsored project of the National Wildlife Federation with its own advisory board and fundraising responsibilities. We have provided HECHO's organizational budget and advisory board list, but please let us know if you would like to see NWF's budget and board.

